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PHOTOGRAPHIC FIX

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A

PHOTOGRAPHIC FIX :

An Original Farce,

IN ONE ACT.

BY

FREDERIC HAY,

AUTHOR OF "CAUGHT BY THE CUFF,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
THEATRICAL PUBLISHER,
LONDON

A PHOTOGRAPHIC FIX.

First Performed at the Royal Victoria Theatre, on Saturday, November 4, under the management of Messrs. Fenton and Frampton.

Characters.

MICHAEL ANGELO CHROME.	MR. GEORGE YARNOLD
EBENEZER STAGGERS.	MR. J. HOWARD
BOB CROPP.	MR. J. C. LEVEY
MISS DIANA DUFF.	MISS HEATHCOTE
MISS CAROLINE CROPP.	MISS ELLEN POWELL

Costumes.

MICHAEL ANGELO.—Long dressing-gown, smoking cap, light trousers. *Second dress*: Old grey coat, white hat.

EBENEZER STAGGERS.—Black coat, dark waistcoat and trousers, black hat.

BOB CROPP.—Coarse brown suit, wide-awake hat.

DIANA DUFF.—Spotted muslin, dark shawl, bonnet.

CAROLINE CROPP.—Blue muslin, grey shawl, light bonnet.

(Mr. Lacy's Second List.)

A PHOTOGRAPHIC FIX.

Scene represents a Photographer's Room—camera on a tripod—small table—bottle of water and glasses on table—door centre—small cupboard with practicable door L.—small cupboard with practicable door R.

M. ANGELO. (discovered turning over leaves of a pocket-book.) Let me read her note once more. (takes out paper.) Brief but bitter. (reads) Beer one shilling and sixpence. Agonizing reminder of a neighbouring tap—go in. (puts it away and turns over leaves again—reads.) Summons from Buggin's for assault—washing two shirts and one stocking, fourpence; by the way an extravagance I mustn't permit myself again. (turning over papers.) Another summons from Buggin's for another assault. Ah! here it is—ungrammatical but fatal epistle—come out. (takes out note.) It's folded in six, and sealed with a nutmeg-grater. (opens it—reads.) Sir, we parts for ever and ever. When next we meets, if ever, Diana Duff's name will be Winkles. Will it? Gratifying for Winkles—confound Winkles. I'll pick Winkles out next time I see him. Euphonious but crustaceous cognomen, go in. (puts note back—shuts book.) Circumstances of a pecuniary nature have since induced me to become engaged to Miss Caroline Cropp, in fact I borrowed five pounds of her—in fact the photography has not been flourishing, and Bob, her brother, he's threatened to kick me, and I've a moral conviction he'd do it too, if I didn't marry his sister—said he wasn't going to have her feelings trifled with—might as well talk about the feelings of a fungus. However, they've arranged it all, and I'm going to marry her, it don't make any difference now Diana is somebody else. Ah, I loved her, and no mistake. (knock at door.) Ah, here comes Caroline, she comes every morning to gloat over her victim.

Enter DIANA C. D., she has her veil down.

No it ain't.

DIANA. Are you the young man that takes the pictures?

M. ANGELO. I'm the artist. Studied with Stanfield, well known in the Gallery. Plain or coloured?

A PHOTOGRAPHIC FIX.

DIANA. A sixpenny one, please—won't fade, will it?

M. ANGELO. Certainly not, couldn't if it tried. I'll explain the principle to you. The colodion amalgamates.

DIANA. (*stopping him.*) Never mind, I dare say I shouldn't understand it.

M. ANGELO. Very likely not. (*aside.*) I'm sure I don't. Take a seat, prepare you a plate in a minute. (*he goes to cupboard R., opens door.*) I believe the atmosphere of this den is making fatal ravages on my constitution, I can't stand it more than a minute at a time. (*goes in and closes door.*)

DIANA. There's something about that young man puts me in mind of Jeremiah—it can't be him—no. I shall never live to see him any more. Oh, what agony I've suffered since I sent him that wicked lying letter, saying I was going to marry Bob Winkles, but my rebellious heart is broken. (*sits on edge of chair.*)

M. ANGELO. (*coming out suddenly.*) Right in the middle, more to the left, my dear—take off your bonnet. Whew it's poisonous.

DIANA. (*alarmed.*) What! my bonnet?

M. ANGELO. No, that awful cell. (*points to cupboard.*)

(DIANA removes her bonnet and veil.)

What Diana!

DIANA. Jeremiah! } (*they rush into each other's arms.*)

M. ANGELO. (*suddenly putting her away.*) Get out. What am I about, you're Winkles's wife.

DIANA. I aint't, indeed.

M. ANGELO. I know you are, I ought to know. Want to get me indicted for bigamy, do you? Get away.

DIANA. I implore you to listen to me. That note I sent you was un—

M. ANGELO. Unpaid. Yes.

DIANA. No—untrue—false. I was jealous of your attentions to Maria. I sent it out of spite—forgive me. (*sobs.*) I've been punished enough. (*seizes his hand.*)

M. ANGELO. (*pathetically.*) I feel that I'm going to make a fool of myself. I say, don't go on that way. Blow me if there isn't some acid in my eye. (*takes out handkerchief.*)

DIANA. After I'd posted it, I was too proud, too wicked to go and ask your forgiveness, but I hoped you, who was always so good and kind—

M. ANGELO. No I wasn't, I won't have it. I never was good. (*aside.*) And I told her they wouldn't fade. Now there's some acid in the other eye, d—d if I don't think

I'm snivelling. (DIANA seizes both his hands.) Leave go, can't you.

DIANA. No, never till I obtain your pardon. Two days after I posted that fatal letter, I called at your lodgings, and when they told me you'd gone away I fainted. For three weeks I lingered between life and death, I wanted to die. Oh Jeremiah forgive me, I deceived you; I deserve it all.

M. ANGELO. No, you don't, I deserve half of it. I was a consummate fool to believe the letter, of course nobody would marry a man called Winkles. I'll never leave you again—never—never—never, (kissing her.) I'm a—

Enter CAROLINE CROPP, c. door.

CAROLINE. Reptile! this is too much for a sensitive heart. (sinks into a chair.)

M. ANGELO. (shaking DIANA off.) Let go, can't you. You ought to be ashamed of yourself young woman (aside.) I'm in for it. (to CAROLINE.) I say it's a joke—its an infernal joke—never saw her before. (signalizes to DIANA.)

DIANA. Why, my dearest Jeremiah—

M. ANGELO. I ain't, I object to it, I ain't anybody's Jeremiah. (aside.) I wish she wouldn't be so confounded familiar. (to CAROLINE.) I say Caroline, (approaches her, aside.) I know this will end in a blow up.

CAROLINE. (rising.) Avaunt! you're a hadder, and as for you Miss, you're a hadderess. Oh! Angelo. (sobs.) Say, is this an optical infusion?

M. ANGELO. Of course it is.

CAROLINE. Am I wandering and deleterious?

M. ANGELO. You are, and no mistake.

CAROLINE. (pointing to DIANA.) Is this a camera of the brain?

M. ANGELO. Yes. (points to camera.) Two of 'em.

DIANA. Jeremiah dearest.

M. ANGELO. There she goes again. (aside to DIANA.) Call me a beast, there's a dear, you'll be the death of me.

CAROLINE. (going to camera.) No sir, it's real—(goes to table and upsets tumbler of water, which she throws down and then breaks.) this is real—(throws down a plate.) and that's real—it's all real—(putting her hand to her heart.) but this is broken.

M. ANGELO. (who is endeavouring to join the broken pieces of plate together.) I can have it mended for tuppence.

CAROLINE. My peace of mind destroyed.

M. ANGELO. (still contemplating plate.) Regularly smashed.

CAROLINE. And my feelings—

M. ANGELO. (*looking at wet on table.*) Upset all over the table.

CAROLINE. (*approaching him.*) Monster ! this is no infusion. (*pointing to DIANA.*) I see the naked truth before my eyes. I despise you, and as for you *Miss*, I leave you with the partner of your crime till my brother's distribution falls upon his head. (*to M. ANGELO.*) Wretch ! I shake you off, (*shakes him.*) but remember Bob. My brother Bob lives to avenge me. Remember ! (*stalks out tragically, c. door, looking back.*) Remember !

DIANA. I thought you would never love another ?

M. ANGELO. I don't love her, I never did, I hate her.

DIANA. I feel faint.

M. ANGELO. Don't, there's a good girl, postpone it till you can do it properly, there's no time now, these premises ain't safe. Come back in an hour, I'll explain it all. I think I hear somebody coming—it's Bob.

DIANA. After all I've suffered—is this the fruit ?

M. ANGELO. No, it's the Cropp, don't detain me. I wouldn't be responsible for the consequences if Bob catches me.

DIANA. Who's Bob ?

M. ANGELO. He's a tanner.

DIANA. Hide yourself.

M. ANGELO. He'll reserve that right for himself, don't go alluding to it in that facetious manner, I want to lock up the establishment ; go away, there's a dear, come back in an hour. (*kissing her*) Yours till death, or till Bob comes, which I take to be about the same sort of thing—good bye. (*Exit DIANA, c. door.*)

M. ANGELO. I've decided on vacating this barn before the Cropp's come in, because I've a presentiment he'll begin thrashing at once. These premises are positively becoming dangerous, it's been a chamber of horrors to me ever since I've taken photographs at sixpence a head. I've made up my mind to reduce the standard. I wouldn't photograph any healthy-looking man over five foot four unless he were paralysed for anything less than a heavy pecuniary consideration. I was summoned twice last week and had my head punched because the photograph's faded ; just as if I can help it, and now here's a lively prospect of being maimed for life if Bob catches me. Holloa ! I hear somebody coming—the Philistines are upon me—to arms. (*takes hat.*) Where's my umbrella. (*takes up umbrella.*) Now then. (*places umbrella at his side like a bayonet.*) Charge !

(rushing off he runs against STAGGERS, who is just entering the door.)

STAGGERS. Confound it! you needn't charge so high. (rubbing his breast.) You've knocked the wind out of me. (seizes him.)

M. ANGELO. Here, let go—blow your wind—I'm in a hurry.

STAGGERS. (dragging him back.) So am I.

M. ANGELO. Well, call again next week. (aside.) I'm in for it again, the same old song of fading away, I suppose.

STAGGERS. (pointing to chair.) Sit down.

M. ANGELO. I'd rather not.

STAGGERS. I insist on it! (takes chair.)

M. ANGELO. Oh! if you're going to get nasty over it, I don't mind, to oblige you. (sits down.)

STAGGERS. (feeling in his pocket.) Now then sir, don't you think—

M. ANGELO. Certainly, I'm quite of your opinion. (rising.) There's a gentleman anxious to see me professionally—good bye.

STAGGERS. (detaining him.) He can wait.

M. ANGELO. I can't though; besides, you mustn't keep Landseer waiting—Sir Edward won't like it.

STAGGERS. (producing photographic cards, and showing them to ANGELO.) Now sir, perhaps you'll have the goodness to inform me what you call these?

M. ANGELO. (inspecting them and looking round anxiously, aside.) That savage will be here directly. Call those? Well, to let you into a professional secret, they're cards, and I'm prepared to stand by the consequence of the assertion.

STAGGERS. I know they're cards, but what's on 'em. (holds them close to M. ANGELO.)

M. ANGELO. The Academy won't like my letting you into the mysteries.

STAGGERS. (angrily.) What's on them?

M. ANGELO. Your fingers; now don't you tell anybody.

STAGGERS. This equivocation is useless, sir. What was on them yesterday?

M. ANGELO. My fingers! don't you go asking me any more professional questions, you'll get me into trouble, you will. (rises.)

STAGGERS. (rising.) This subterfuge won't save you. Yesterday I paid you six shillings for those cards, and they had my portrait on them, warranted not to fade. Oblige me by scrutinizing them, and then inform me if

they haven't faded. (*gives him the cards, which are perfectly blank.*)

M. ANGELO. (*inspecting them.*) They haven't faded, certainly not. (*looking at them closely.*) I can't see a vestige of anything, they haven't faded, they've vanished. I never said they wouldn't vanish. I'm undergoing the process myself. (*attempts to go.*)

STAGGERS. (*stopping him.*) Not if I know it, till you've refunded my six shillings.

M. ANGELO. Why didn't you say so at once. (*feeling in pocket, takes out a shilling.*) There's one. (*looking anxiously round.*) Bob by Jingo ! I think I hear him. (*to STAGGERS.*) I say, take a cheque on Coutts' for the balance, or stop, you haven't got change for a five pound note, have you ?

STAGGERS. Yes !

M. ANGELO. That's awkward.

STAGGERS. On the contrary, I think its rather refreshing.

M. ANGELO. Oblige me by allowing me to know best. I say it is awkward.

STAGGERS. To have change ?

M. ANGELO. No, not to have the note. (*aside.*) This is very embarrassing. (*reflecting.*)

STAGGERS. I want—

M. ANGELO. (*stopping him.*) Don't interrupt me. You very nearly robbed the world of—

STAGGERS. Six shillings !

M. ANGELO. No ! of an idea. (*aside.*) What a mercenary old blackguard. I have it ! There's a gentleman owes me several pounds. (*aside.*) I shall get them too if Bob comes ; perhaps you wouldn't mind receiving them, or if that proposition don't suit, I'm prepared to make an alarming sacrifice. I'll take your photograph by a new process, and colour them for nothing. I'll be back in ten minutes ; in the meantime you can amuse yourself with the camera. I dare say you'll find it a source of pleasing excitement. (*looking about anxiously, aside.*) He can't be long now. I say you mustn't detain me any longer, back in ten minutes, *au revoir*. (*is about to go.*)

STAGGERS. Are you deceiving me ?

M. ANGELO. You may depend on me—good bye. (*Exit c.*)

STAGGERS. Now I'm alone again ; solitude is always suggestive of strychnine and despair since I've lost Caroline—I've dissipated a small fortune in advertising for her. (*takes out newspaper.*) Here it is as plain as fourpence a line can make it. (*reads.*) " Anybody giving information

respecting Caroline Cropp, shall be handsomely rewarded, by applying to Ebenezer Staggers, Muggin's-row, Pimlico." I've been inundated with replies—there have been fifty crops in the field, but the real Caroline isn't to be had; last June I was attracted to Brighton for a small change—three shillings and sixpence—I made Caroline's acquaintance by the sad sea wave—she'd accidentally dropped this handkerchief (*takes out handkerchief*) I'll waive it, not the handkerchief, no, the subject it's too painful—she was at that time commercially interested in tripe—but her heart was above it—anatomically speaking it would be—aided by an aged parent she disposed of that nourishing diet to the public—her only brother was absent in America. The poetical situation of the entire family was too affecting for my sensitive nature—I loved her—proposed—was accepted, and composed an Ode to Tripe as a delicate attention to Caroline. Alas! that wasn't all I owed to tripe—no! one fatal night, t'was a Friday, I'd partaken of that article in defiance of the popular ditty—scorning superstition, I was sauntering home listening to the "murmur of the tide," when two myrmidons of the law flew at me, seized me, bound me tight—yes, they were tight—they wouldn't let go, appeal was of no avail—they wouldn't hear me, they refused even to listen to the *murmer of the tied*, although I've every reason to believe I *rose* into eloquence more than once—with an incorrectness that became irritating I was informed at intervals as they dragged my body along the sand that they "*knoved* I was the cove," when I knew I wasn't. It appears that another blackguard called Staggers had committed a forgery and fled to Brighton. My name was Staggers, Brighton my residence, so the law, with its usual discrimination, took me for the other man—the inexorable law demanded a Staggers—I was flung into a dungeon, but the law had a Staggers—after three weeks detention my case came on—I came off, honourably acquitted—the real Staggers was captured—released, I flew to Brighton—Caroline's residence was shut up—so was I. A notice informed the public the business was sold—so was I. Since that day I've been wandering about a victim to circumstances—excitement has become necessary to my repose—I must be up and doing—my brain grows obscure. Ah! here's the *obscura* (*arranges the camera, puts cloth over his head and appears as if endeavouring to focus something*) Yes, I'm an altered man, grief has left its awful mark on—

Enter BOB CROPP C., who immediately gives him a whack over the back with a stick.

My back ! oh Lord !

BOB seizes him by the back of the neck, runs him round the stage.

BOB. Marry her, won't you ? Snakes, I'll riddle you (*stops at footlights, then runs him round again*).

STAGGERS. Now we're off again.

BOB (*stopping*) Now what have you got to say ?

STAGGERS. (*revolving*) Nothing till I have done revolving. I shall come round directly, and then I mean to give you in charge of the tallest policeman I can find.

BOB. Oh, snakes ! here's a mistake ! Took you for the other man.

STAGGERS. Well, don't do it again. I'm always being taken for the other man. You've turned every drop of blood in me *twice* ; how would *you* like it ?

BOB. I'm excited. You'd be excited too if you'd gone through what I have. I didn't hurt you, did I ?

STAGGERS. Didn't you though ? I ought to know (*rubs back*).

BOB. Serves you jolly well right ! What business had you looking through that machine. Took you for Michael Angelo.

STAGGERS. I'm clawed ! Look here (*points to coat collar*) and spun round like a dancing dervish. (*aside*) He must be a pupil of Turner's. My head's swimming now.

BOB. (*looking about room*) Where is he. I'll pound him into smash if I catch him—that's the second blackguard that's jilted my sister—the other was a convict—I'd like to get the pair of 'em—snakes, I would, I'd throttle 'em. (*to Staggers*) What are you doing here, located perhaps ?

STAGGERS. Certainly not, I'm waiting for that rascal, Michael Angelo.

BOB. What's he done for you ?

STAGGERS. Nothing, and charged me six shillings for it.

BOB. What are you going to do for him ?

STAGGERS. Punch his head, and charge him six shillings for it.

BOB. Mean it ?

STAGGERS. I do.

BOB. Give us your flipper. I'll help you. Shouldn't wonder if he ain't stowed somewhere—located to the garret. You stay here, I'll track him down like a beaver.

(*Exit centre.*)

STAGGERS. Capital! its getting quite exciting—in fact its a trifle too exciting. I'm not quite sure that he hasn't dislocated my collar-bone—never mind, can't take me for Michael Angelo again, so here goes. (*goes to camera endeavouring to fix it.*) Seems on its last legs, (*pulls out legs*) or else its suffering from constitutional weakness. Confound it, I can't arrange this tripod. Ah! tripe—odd, the mention of that name should remind me of Caroline. (*arranges cloth over his head as before, and looks through camera.*) I almost fancy I see her before me—she looks like an—

Enter CAROLINE, c. who immediately seizes him and drags him back, the cloth being still over his head.

CAROLINE. Alligator! my brother hasn't killed you yet.

STAGGERS. (*under cloth.*) There's that revolving ruffian again. Let go, I'm the other man. (*emerging from cloth.*) What, Caroline!! (*he attempts to embrace her.*)

CAROLINE. Ebenezer!!! (*waves him off.*) Away, the mark of Cain is on you.

STAGGERS. I shouldn't wonder. (*turning her his back.*) It isn't swollen, is it?

CAROLINE. Oh Ebenezer! you've broke my heart—you winded yourself round my young afflictions like a boa-constructor round the neck of a panther—I'm breathless.

STAGGERS. I say, don't go on that way.

CAROLINE. I shall! never can I forget that fatal Friday night, you'd scarcely left me when a customer comes in—“They've captured him” says he—“Making so bold,” who says I? Ebenezer Staggers the forger says he—I was serving him with tripe, and it quite turned.

STAGGERS. The tripe?

CAROLINE. No, turned my blood—I dropped—

STAGGERS. The knife?

CAROLINE. No, the subject till he was gone—then I went out and found it was true.

STAGGERS. It's a lie.

CAROLINE. Ebenezer, you're a convict, and Caroline weeps for you like a crockydile sobbin for its offspring.

STAGGERS. There she goes again with her Zoological comparisons—leave off. I tell you I ain't, I was torn away from you and hurled into a dungeon, mistaken for another man. I'm getting used to it—I rather like it. There's an awful blackguard just gone out, who, after dislocating my collar-bone and describing sundry circles with me, coolly

informed me he'd taken me for the other man—and I'm grateful for it.

CAROLINE. That was my brother.

STAGGERS. That revolving ruffian—ah, nice gentlemanly young man—excitable disposition though.

CAROLINE. Do you know him?

STAGGERS. Yes; I was very much struck by him—*(aside)*—principally about the back. Oh, Caroline, what I've suffered on your account.

CAROLINE. And what I've suffered on yours.

STAGGERS. Yes; what we've both suffered on each other's account—three weeks I fed on the damp vapours of a dungeon—it was an "awful cell," but I was honourably acquitted, I'll show you the documents. I say that revolving blackguard—I mean that excitable young man said somebody wouldn't marry his sister, he didn't mean you—say he didn't.

CAROLINE. But he did! I am—that is, I was engaged to Michael Angelo.

STAGGERS. Blow Michael Angelo! he shan't have you—he owes me six shillings—I was honourably acquitted—I'm engaged to you—besides I've come into property—I've got a thousand pounds.

CAROLINE. This is too much for a sensitive heart—I'm overcome. *(sinks into STAGGER's arms—STAGGERS embraces her.)*

Enter BOB CROPP, seeing STAGGERS, seizes and drags him away.

BOB. What, at it again you villain—come out of that—what before my very eyes—possums. *(flourishing his stick.)* I'll get some music out of you.

STAGGERS. I shouldn't wonder—I'm *collared* and *collared* and I've been *recently hammered*. I believe this camera 'll be the death of me. I wonder whether this is what Michael Angelo calls pleasing excitement—'cause if it is I've had enough.

CAROLINE. Oh! Bob, don't, it's Ebenezer.

BOB. What Ebenezer?

CAROLINE. My Ebenezer! Ebenezer Staggers!

BOB. The convict? come on. *(squares at him.)* I thought you were no great shakes.

STAGGERS. And I'd conceived such a contrary opinion of you—specially after you dislocated my neck.

BOB. Come on.

STAGGERS. *(takes chair and places before him—aside.)* Now he's going to begin again—leave off!

CAROLINE. Spare him, there's been a mistake.

BOB. There's always a mistake somewhere—come on young Botany Bay. (*follows him round Stage.*)

STAGGERS. I really believe he likes it. Murder! Police! Hold him down.

CAROLINE. (*stopping BOB.*) Spare him—he's innocent—its another Staggers. What he have suffered.

BOB. The other Staggers.

CAROLINE. No; this one.

BOB. Then come on. (*CAROLINE still holds him.*)

STAGGERS. That's right Caroline—hold him down—there's been a mistake—an infernal mistake—I ought to know—I ain't myself at all, and the other Staggers or somebody else. I'll explain it directly—I'm *staggered* for the minute—I was honourably acquitted—show you the papers. (*approaching him.*) I say I didn't mind your dislocating my neck—upon my life I didn't—I ought to know, I forgive you—shake hands. How d'ye do? I'm going to marry her—it's awful jolly—shake hands again—quite well? I've come into property—I've got a thousand pounds—it's all right. (*he takes CAROLINE aside.*)

BOB. A thousand pounds, it must be all right. I'm bound to take something out of Michael Angelo at any rate.

CAROLINE. I despise the artist.

STAGGERS. So do I, we all do—turn him out.

BOB. Where is he? Did you say he charged you?

STAGGERS. Yes, with his umbrella—injured the ribs.

BOB. Of his umbrella?

STAGGERS. No, mine. I say, let's take it out of his camera. I'll photograph you—I know all about it, saw him do it yesterday.

BOB. All right—now then fire up. (*sits down.*) I'm squatted. (*aside.*) He's got a thousand pounds. Caroline you go and tell mother to get supper, I'll bring the convict—I mean Mr. Staggers—better take a cab. (*to STAGGERS.*) Young manacles—haven't got five shillings about you, have you?

STAGGERS. Course I have—glad you asked me—don't I belong to the family?

BOB. You do, and a highly useful member you'll become. (*takes money.*) Here you are, Caroline. (*gives her money,*)

CAROLINE. Good bye, Ebenezer.

STAGGERS. My angel, good bye. (*Exit CAROLINE, c.* Don't I feel jolly now I've found her; I'm lighter than a

cork—I shall have to be wired down directly. Get up. (*pulls Bob out of chair.*) I don't know what I'm about, sit down; (*forces him into chair*) this excitement has upset me. (*get up.*) I forgot we want the plates and chemicals; he keeps them in here. (*pointing to cupboards.*) You go in there, (*points to cupboard R.*) that's where he keeps the plates.

BOB. (*going to cupboard R, looks in.*) Keeps the plates here, does he; dirty beast, wonder where he keeps the knives and forks.

STAGGERS. Go in! (*puts him in.*) Shut the door, light's fatal.

BOB. So's darkness, I think; phew! don't it stink; (*goes in—looking out*) none of your larks, now. (*shuts door.*)

STAGGERS. (*going to cupboard L.—opens door.*) Whew! it's enough to kill a fellow; never mind, it's only for a minute. (*enters and shuts door after him.*)

M. ANGELO. (*who enters cautiously.*) All quiet, they were tired of waiting, I suppose; (*looking round*) no indications of violence. There's no time to be lost, I've decided on quitting these *quarters* for a month, and taking a better *half* for life—Diana and Dover—sea bathing, shrimps and winkles; no, hang winkles, I've had enough of him. As I'm not aware of the existence of any Act of Parliament to prevent a gentleman securing his property, here goes. (*goes to cupboard L. and locks it, putting keg in his pocket.*) I don't pretend to any refinement of feeling, but I'm blowed if I'd put a fellow in that den; (*crosses to R. and locks cupboard pocketing the key*) and as for this, it's the most "awful cell," out. Now I've made everybody and everything snug and comfortable. Hurrah! for Diana and Dover. Tra-la-la. (*dances off, c.*)

STAGGERS. (*knocking at door.*) It's all ready, open the door.

BOB. Let me out, Snakes! I'll smash up everything!

STAGGERS. Do, there's a good fellow—I'm choking—it's poisonous.

BOB. Water! murder! (*crash heard.*) All the chemicals down, it's all up. I'm on fire! I shall burst.

STAGGERS. Open the door, do! this is manslaughter. Good bye, Caroline!—(*noise heard*)—the expiring words of Stagger's are—

Enter MICHAEL ANGELO, c.

M. ANGELO. In the excitement of the moment, I quite forgot Diana was coming here; she can't be long now.

(takes a chair.) A moment of calm reflection and a mouthful of something to eat, wouldn't be amiss, (takes from his pocket a penny roll and a sausage) as the only nourishing article of consumption I've tasted to-day, is a — (noise in cupboard, L.) Cat by jingo—that's the third floor's—it's my belief they neglect that animal, poor devil, I locked him in, I suppose. (goes to cupboard calling out.) Pish ! get out of that.

STAGGERS. I can't—good bye—farewell.

M. ANGELO. Burglars ! by the Lord Harry. (calling to STAGGERS.) You're in for it—serves you right for prigging, (calling through keyhole) it's a lifer—Horsemonger-lane jail. He must be hard up for oxygen, blowed if he isn't breaking through the keyhole ; he's on the *qui vive*. (goes to table and gets tumbler of water which he throws through keyhole.) Get out of that you luxurious blackguard, (listening) I think he's expiring ; I hear him blowing and gasping—he's near his last kick—can't hurt if I do let him out. (opens door, STAGGERS comes out, face somewhat black, he appears exhausted and sinks into nearest chair.) He's awful bad, (shakes him) wake up young Kleptomania. Holloa ! it's my friend fading away—I'm off—devilish hard I can't enjoy a meal without being disturbed. (puts roll and sausage into his pocket.)

STAGGERS. A glass of water and I'll forgive you.

M. ANGELO. (aside.) What a thirsty beast, he's had one. (brings him glass of water.)

STAGGERS. (taking it.) I shan't survive it.

M. ANGELO. (stopping him.) Don't drink it, then.

STAGGERS. No, not this ; that "Awful Cell." (points to cupboard, appears exhausted, closes his eyes.)

M. ANGELO. (sitting down, commences to eat again.) Have a bit. (offers him sausage, looking at him.) Hang me if he hasn't put the shutters up, wake up ; how do you think a gentleman can enjoy the luxuries of life, if you persist in conducting yourself in that disgraceful manner, think you're at an alderman's feast, I suppose—I'm powerfully impressed with the idea that there's an undue proportion of pepper with the meat in this orbicular diet, which popular prejudice has condemned as an article of consumption, but when you know the author of 'em as I do, and feel convinced you're eating—— (noise heard in cupboard R.) Cat, by jingo, (getting up) it's enough to make a fellow feel sick, I can't get a morsel of food without being interrupted. (goes to cupboard, R., calls out.) Pish ! get out of that ! Fancy you are on the tiles, perhaps ; but you ain't.

BOB. (*from inside.*) Oh, Staggers, I'll smash you, when I get out.

M. ANGELO. Burglar this time. (*calling to him.*) You're in for it, its a lifer—I'm going for assistance. You'd better make yourself comfortable till the van comes. (*going down to STAGGERS, who has somewhat recovered.*) I say, I've got him!

STAGGERS. Who?

M. ANGELO. Burglar, you fool; you didn't think it was Cardinal Wolsey, did you?

STAGGERS. Where?

M. ANGELO. (*pointing to cupboard.*) There!

STAGGERS. I expect its Bob.

M. ANGELO. What Bob?

STAGGERS. Bob Cropp, *my* Caroline's brother.

M. ANGELO. (*aside.*) Bob Cropp, his Caroline's brother, consequently Bob Cropp, *my* Caroline's brother.

STAGGERS. Let him out.

M. ANGELO. Are you confident he's well secured?

STAGGERS. Yes!

M. ANGELO. Then I shall conclude my irregular meal. (*sits down and commences eating.*)

STAGGERS. Want to murder the man do you? give me the key—he must be nearly dead—I ought to know—I was as nigh gone as a toucher myself.

M. ANGELO. (*giving him key.*) Oh, if you think he's nearly expired you can let him out—I shan't.

STAGGERS goes to cupboard, unlocks door—BOB issues face blackened—seizes STAGGERS beats him round stage.

BOB. I've got you, you jail bird—lock me in would you?

STAGGERS. Now he's beginning again. Let go, this is another egregious mistake. It's the other man; I never locked you in!

BOB. How did I know that—you'd no business to let me out then—serves you right—don't you do it again.

STAGGERS. Certainly not.

BOB. Didn't you hear me singing out?

STAGGERS. No; you never sung out.

BOB. I didn't—I howl'd though. I've been doing nothing else since I've been in there but yell and yell—look at me! ain't I yeller!! the infernal bottles kept tumbling out—I'm dyed.

STAGGERS. I'm dead—I've been in there too (*pointing to cupboard, L.*); don't you delude yourself with the idea that I've had a pleasant time of it 'cause I have'nt—look

at me—call this a respectable appearance—I say I never locked you in.

BOB. Why didn't you say so then—got the lock jaw?

STAGGERS. No—I got the key to it.

BOB. To the lock jaw?

STAGGERS. No; to the mystery.

BOB. Where?

STAGGERS. (pointing to MICHAEL ANGELO) There!

BOB. (seizing M. ANGELO,) Come here—I didn't see you before. Now Michael Angelo, I'll work you to an oil—no use resisting, in you go. (collars him.)

STAGGERS. Of course you do—(seizes him.)

M. ANGELO. I'm innocent.

STAGGERS. You'd better inform the public you're retiring from business.

M. ANGELO. Mr. Cropp don't—it's quite a mystery to me. This lock beats the human understanding. I say, be generous—don't plunge me into despair. It's very likely I shall be the father of a family—you ought to take that into consideration—I'll do anything—I'll marry Caroline.

STAGGERS. Marry Caroline—you brute—only breathe her name and you're a corpse (drags him along.)

M. ANGELO. Now this maniac's beginning.

BOB. In you go—you'll have plenty of time for reflection in the dark.

M. ANGELO. Don't make light of it—I'll marry her.

STAGGERS. No, you won't, I—

M. ANGELO. I'm engaged to her.

STAGGERS. So am I.

M. ANGELO. Do you mean to marry her?

STAGGERS. Yes!

M. ANGELO. Then I'll forgive you. You ain't joking, are you?

STAGGERS. Forgive me—I don't mean to forgive you; I've had my neck dislocated—my head punched—my back broken. I've been dragged a horrible spectacle round this room, and only just escaped suffocation by a mere chance. All this on your account, and now you want to marry my wife, and then you're anxious to forgive me—I object to it—want to marry her?

M. ANGELO. No, I don't. I wouldn't marry her for—(looks at Bob.)

BOB. (shaking him) Wouldn't you.

M. ANGELO. I'll do anything. (aside) Here's sudden death on both sides, and a gaping cemetery in front. Mr. Cropp, respect the last moments. It looks bad to be hurried into a tomb.

BOB. In you go, neck and —(*pushes him*).

M. ANGELO. Cropp, don't. It's a solemn moment—don't. (*struggles*)

Enter DIANA, runs to BOB, stopping him.

DIANA. Spare him, I implore you. Look at him, he's going to die.

M. ANGELO. Yes; going to *Di-ana*.

BOB. (*to Angelo*) Who's this young woman, do you know her?

M. ANGELO. (*to STAGGERS*) You're going to marry Caroline, ain't you? None of your larks, you know!

STAGGERS. Of course I am!

BOB. Who is it?

M. ANGELO. (*to BOB*) I say you won't be angry, will you? It's my wife that is to be, subject to your approval, of course.

DIANA. Yes, gentlemen, spare him (*to Bob*) don't strike him—forgive him for my sake.

M. ANGELO. Go it Diana—they can't stand that long.

BOB. Well, (*releasing him*) now look here, I'm going to be lenient with you on account of her, but mind you don't come any of your —— tricks again with Bob Cropp 'cause if you do (*shakes fist at him*.)

M. ANGELO. I comprehend perfectly—put it away, don't.

BOB. Now young Staggers our supper's waiting—(*going*)—stop, suppose we invite Michael Angelo.

STAGGERS. I'm agreeable.

BOB. Angelo—come and join us—you can bring Mrs. Angelo—forgive and forget—I like to do the thing handsome.

M. ANGELO. He ain't a bad sort.

BOB. What are you dodging about, come along.

M. ANGELO. I want to say a few words to our friends in front.

BOB. Why don't you do it then.

M. ANGELO. So I will—(*coming to footlights.*)

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BOB.

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